Montana Planning News

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May 1978
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Recommendations to Improve Subdivision Regulations

Montana may have better subdivision laws by the end of the next Legislature, if tentative decisions of an interim subcommittee are implemented.

The Legislative Subcommittee on Subdivisions has asked its staff to draft bills that would:

-eliminate most exemptions from local subdivision review and substitute a speedy summary review process for small subdivisions and those conforming to a master plan containing public service, land use and housing elements.

The family conveyance exemption would not be eliminated, but restricted to one per family member in a lifetime.

-change the formula for parkland dedication from acreage to density--1,000 square feet of parkland (or cash in lieu) per dwelling unit. Also, communities could spend up to 1/3 of money from parkland dedications for maintenance of parkland.

-replace the eight public interest criteria for subdivision review with four more specific ones, addressing density, local growth goals, traffic systems, natural resources and the public health, safety and welfare.

The subcommittee also tentatively decided on other legislation, including bills to help form rural improvement districts, industrial development bonds for services to subdivisions, local health department review of individual water and sewer systems, and standards for comprehensive plans that are to be used to deny subdivisions or to allow summary review.

When the draft bills are complete, the subcommittee will be meeting again to discuss their final recommendations to the Legislature. For more information, contact Debbie Schmidt, Legislative Council, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601/ 449-3064.

HUD 701 Funds

Application forms and information on HUD's 701 Comprehensive Planning Assistance Grants for local governments are in the mail. Montana has a tentative budget of $100,000 to assist communities solve problems and to implement policies related to community development.

To qualify, a local government must return a completed application *by May 15* to Byron Roberts, DCA Planning Division, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601. Call 449-3757 if you have any questions.

FmHA Announces Rural Planning Grant Program

The Farmers Home Administration has released regulations for administering its $5 million rural planning grant program.

The program will serve rural areas, defined not to include "any area in any city or town which has a population in excess of 10,000." Counties, regardless of their populations, may apply if their proposal doesn't include incorporated cities or towns over that limit.

The planning projects may include but not be limited to rural planning needs in the areas of housing, energy management, community facilities, health, transportation, education, recreation, resource conservation and the development and/or preservation of land for residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial uses.

Interested areas can contact county FmHA offices, the main FmHA office in the Federal Building, P.O. Box 850, Bozeman, MT 59715/ 587-5271 Extension 4211, or call the special telephone number the FmHA has set up for further information: (202) 447-2573.

Planning People

The Lewis and Clark Areawide Planning Organization has added two new staff members. Gus Byrom III is the new associate planner working on transportation and Helena Valley Comprehensive Plans. Charlie Hail is the new assistant planner; he'll be working on the review of subdivision and development plans.

Stuart Westlake has been hired by Gallatin County to assist in reviewing subdivision plats.

Finally, Kevin McEwen, Lewistown businessman, has been elected president of the Lewistown City-County Planning Board.

MAP Meeting Rescheduled

The Montana Association of Planners (MAP) has rescheduled its spring conference on "Urban Revitalization and Design." The new dates are June 1 and 2 at the Ramada Inn in Butte.

For more information about reservations, the agenda, etc., contact the nearest program committee member: John McMartin, Billings, 245-6144; Roger Pederson, Helena, 449-2804; Dave Erickson, Polson, 883-5514; Gale Allen, Butte, 723-4714 or Lisa Anderson, Helena, 442-5000.

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We welcome responses to articles, reader letters and article suggestions.

This publication is financed in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

Housing Programs in Montana:

Where do you go for more information?

If you're interested in housing in Montana, there is a variety of state and local programs set up to help you—the problem is finding the right one(s) to meet your needs.

In this issue of *MPN*, we're briefly outlining housing programs coordinated by three agencies: the DCA Housing Bureau, the Montana Board of Housing and the Farmers Home Administration. We've included addresses and phone numbers for you to contact for more information.

There are elements of housing programs in other agencies and programs, and new ones developing; to keep up to date on these, or to get technical assistance on your housing program or plan, contact the DCA Housing Bureau.

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Do You Honesty Believe We Really Have Enough Information to Justify a Decision?

Housing

Housing Bureau
Department of Community Affairs
Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601
(406) 449-2804

The Housing Bureau administers the Federal Section 8 Rental Assistance Program for existing housing, which pays part of the rent of lower-income families to insure that no more than 25% of their income goes for rent.

Families may apply at one of twelve local administering agencies; successful applicants may obtain the rental assistance in their present housing units, or take up to 60 days to find new accommodations subject to federal rent ceilings and housing standards.

The rent subsidies are paid directly to the landlord, and they may be renewed for a maximum period of five years. Units are inspected each year and family income is recertified.

Administering Agencies:

Districts 1, 2, 3: Action for Eastern Montana, Hagenston Bldg., Glendive, MT 59330/365-3364

District 4: Human Resource Development Council, Box 1509, 935 4th St., Havre, MT 59501/265-6744

District 5: Opportunities, Inc., P. O. Box 2532, Great Falls, MT 59403/727-8722

District 6: Central Montana District Council, Box 302, Roundup, MT 59072/323-2547

District 7 (except Billings Metropolitan area): Human Resource Development Council, 2714 Montana Ave., Billings, MT 59101/248-7477

Billings Metropolitan Area: Housing Authority of Billings, P. O. Box 1178, Billings, MT 59103/248-7511

District 8 (except Helena): Rocky Mountain Development Council, Box 721, 201 S. Main, Helena, MT 59601/442-1552

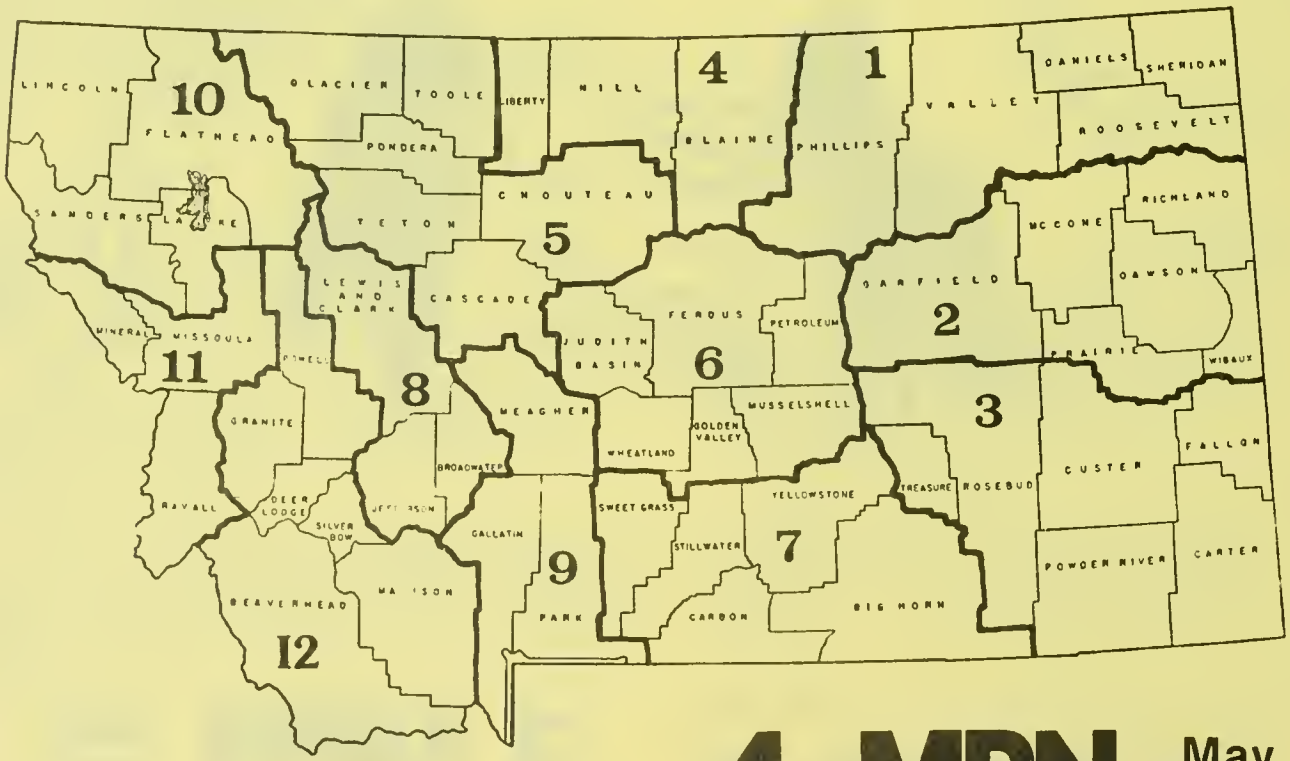
City of Helena: Helena Housing Authority, 1240 Butte Ave., Helena, MT 59601/442-7970

District 9: Human Resource Development Council, 234 E. Main, Bozeman, MT 59715/587-4486

District 10: Northwest Human Resource Development Council, Box 1058, 1st and Main Bldg., Kalispell, MT 59901/755-1567

District 11: Human Resource Development Council, 207 E. Main St., Missoula, MT 59801/728-3710

District 12: Butte-Silver Bow Anti-Poverty Council, Box 3486, 107 E. Granite, Butte, MT 59701/792-7200



Housing

Montana Board of Housing
Department of Administration
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59601
449-3040

The Board of Housing administers the State Housing Act of 1975, and it is currently operating the Single-Family Forward Commitment Morgage Purchase Program. Under this program the Board has issued two series of revenue bonds totalling over $56 million purchase mortgages made to lower-income families by private lending institutions.

The purchase programs makes mortgage money available to lower-income families (under $16,000 adjusted annual income) and makes the loans more affordable (mortgages have been 6 7/8% and 7 1/8%). Interested persons apply directly to participating private lending institutions; contact the Board for an up-to-date list.

The Board is also funding one multi-family housing project—the Clark Fork Manor in Missoula, with 131 one- and two-bedroom rental units for elderly and handicapped person eligible for Section 8 rental assistance.

Farmers Home Administration
Federal Building
P. O. Box 850
Bozeman, MT 59715
587-5271 Ext. 4211

The FmHA administers several housing programs. The Section 502 Rural Housing Loans Program provides low-interest loans to qualifying lower-income families (not over $15,600 adjusted annual income). The loans are for the purchase of new or existing housing in rural areas or within small urban areas (not over 20,000 population).

The Section 504 Rural Housing Loans and Grants Program provides low-interest loans to low-income families to repair or improve homes owned by them. The loans are reserved for eliminating health and safety hazards.

Applicants at least 62 years of age and without sufficient income to repay a Section 504 loan may be eligible for a grant, rather than a loan.

FmHA also recently announced its Rural Planning Grant Program, which gives planning funds to cities not over 10,000 population and counties (exclusive of cities larger than the limit).

Readers Write

RAILROAD PLAN

I have a suggestion for the railroad plan drafters, and that is the hope they will take a good, close look at the commuter problem between Darby and Missoula in the Bitterroot Valley, and draft into their plan some sort of provision for the possibility of a commuter train running between Darby and Missoula over the existing Burlington Northern Railway tracks—before the BN abandons this track! Such a commuter train will greatly relieve the ever-growing congestion over a very poor US 93 Highway, and also conserve a large amount of non-renewable fuel being used by hundreds of commuters.

Mrs. J. C. French, Darby

GUEST COMMENTARY: Cliff Christian

Read the guest commentary with interest; now would appreciate a rebuttal from another viewpoint. It certainly has not been my observation that the environmentalists (including myself) are affluent citizens who have it made. I've been in the business for 18 years now and have a pretty good idea of the wealth distribution among the conservationists and environmentalists. Thank goodness, there are some well-heeled among us because if there weren't, many of us would never have gotten off the ground!

Doris Milner, Hamilton

Supreme Court Addresses Land Sales

The following passage is the conclusion of a recent Montana Supreme Court decision. Justice Daniel Shea wrote the opinion for a unanimous court.

"The need for stringent controls governing the conduct of the real estate business has never been greater. We are not unmindful that speculation in land in Montana in the last several years has skyrocketed, with no apparent end in sight. This sale of land as a limitless commodity, rather than as one of our most precious and irreplaceable resources, has also given birth to a burgeoning real estate industry. The area is bustling with those who are either getting directly into the act of buying and selling for speculative reasons, or indirectly by acting as brokers and real estate agents. The rapid turnover of property is relentlessly encouraged by the brokers and agents. They are not, however, without their responsibilities to the public. While the Real Estate License Act contains salutory provisions with regard to the conduct of brokers and agents, they are not exhaustive. The duty of a real estate broker or agent to deal fairly with his client ultimately arises from a separate fiduciary relationship between them, and not because of the existence of a licensing act. While a breach of duty may also be a violation of the licensing act, it may also constitute an independent reason to deny a commission to the broker or agent--perhaps the most effective deterrent of all."

HOUSING PUBLICATIONS

Programs of HUD, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1977; available free from the Director of News Services, Office of Public Affairs, Room 9245, HUD, 451 Seventh St. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410

Information on HUD programs—descriptions, eligibility requirements, administering offices and status and scope of the programs. Includes block grants, neighborhood facilities grants and many other housing and community development programs.

Housing Affairs Letter, Community Development Services, Inc., 399 National Press Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20045; $95/ year.

A weekly (50 times a year) newsletter outlining programs, issues, legislation and policies in housing and community affairs. Timely notification of current events.

Technical Series, The Housing Assistance Council 1828 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

The HAC publishes a good reference series on housing and community development. Past booklets have included guides to housing and community development for small towns and rural areas, water and sewer facilities loans and grants and Farmers Home Administration programs. Contact HAC for an up-to-date listing of available booklets and prices.

NASA Satellite to Scan Montana

A current cooperative project between Montana and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is testing the usefulness of satellite imagery for resource managers at the state and local levels.

The project will generate information about four resources in a test area in west central Montana: inventorying dams, reservoirs and water systems across 26,000 square miles; identifying agricultural land across the same area for appraisal purposes; examining the species, types and extent of forest land, and generating a countywide land use map of Cascade County for use in planning.

Montana will also be correlating data from the orbiting Landsat satellite with an existing state geodata system that includes information on water quality, mineral rights, vegetation, wildlife and surface ownership.

The resulting information should be a useful demonstration to other areas in Montana of the potential use of satellites in land use inventorying and planning.

NASA is training the Montana staff and providing satellite imagery and data analysis for the project. State and local agencies will classify computer-processed data and test them for accuracy. Jet Propulsion Laboratory is providing computer programming for the project—the same used by NASA in flights past other planets in our solar system.

For more information about the project, contact Tom Dundas, Research and Information Systems Division, Department of Community Affairs, Capitol Station, Helena, MT 59601/ 449-2896.

"The Mandate"

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DCA Releases First 3 Counties In Land Use Mapping Project

How much of Lewis and Clark, Hill and Cascade Counties is in cropland? What areas are now being developed, and what ones are likely to be developed next? The DCA Planning Division has just released colorful land use maps to help you answer these and other questions.

Maps of the three counties are the first completed through a project slated to prepare maps of all 56 counties by early 1979; twelve state and federal agencies and private corporations are cooperating in the DCA-coordinated project.

The maps show ten different categories of land use: urban and built-up areas; mineral extraction areas; heavy industry and utility areas; rural and suburban tracts; irrigated cropland, hayland and pastureland; non-irrigated cropland; recreational areas; rangeland; commercial forest, and forest cover areas.

According to John Andrews, DCA coordinator of the project, maps not only show present land use patterns, but help predict future changes in land use: "For example, if you have subdivision tracts surrounding an agricultural area, it's a good indication that the ag land will sooner or later be developed. We think these maps are going to be useful tools for individuals, developers and local officials."

Copies of the maps will be available for inspection at planning departments, extension agencies, soil conservation district offices and libraries. DCA will also be sending a limited number of copies to county commissioners for public distribution.

The next two maps, for Deer Lodge and Mineral Counties, are tentatively scheduled for release in June.

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